

STARS AND STRIPES

Saturday, March 29, 2003

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas



AP

In this image from video smoke rises over Baghdad Saturday. Bombing continued the day after four Marines were killed by a suicide bomber at a check point.

Suicide bomber kills 4 Marines

BY DAVID CRARY

The Associated Press

A bomber identified as a noncommissioned Iraqi army officer killed four American soldiers Saturday, and Iraq threatened more such suicide attacks. Coalition forces pounded Republican Guard positions in preparation for an all-out push toward Baghdad.

"This is just the beginning," said Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan, after the bombing at a checkpoint in south-central Iraq. He said such attacks would become "routine military policy."

"We will use any means to kill our enemy in our land and we will follow the enemy into its land," Ramadan said.

It was the first reported suicide attack against U.S. or British forces since they invaded Iraq. Iraqi dissidents have claimed that Saddam Hussein opened a training camp for Arab volunteers willing to carry out suicide attacks against coalition troops.

Capt. Andrew Wallace said the slain Army soldiers were part of the 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, manning a checkpoint on a highway north of Najaf. A taxi stopped near the checkpoint, the driver waved for help, and the car exploded as the soldiers approached, Wallace told Associated Press Television News.

Ramadan identified the bomber as Ali Jaafar al-Noamani, a noncommissioned army officer and father of several children. A detailed state-

ment on the bombing would be issued later, he said.

U.S. commanders said the attack would not force the coalition to make operational changes.

"We continue to place force protection as our highest priority, but that doesn't mean we're going to back into little holes and hide," said Col. Will Grimsley, commander of the 1st Brigade.

Maj. Gen. Gene Renuart Jr., the U.S. Central Command's director of operations, said the attack was "a symbol of an organization that's starting to get a little bit desperate."

In Baghdad, Iraq's Information Ministry building was damaged in a pre-dawn U.S. missile attack. The building remained intact, but satellite

See **SUICIDE** on Page 2

Sailors below deck play role in war, too

BY KENDRA HELMER

Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS KITTY HAWK — Breathing fresh air isn't a priority for sailors who bust their butts as many as 20 hours a day below the aircraft carrier's flight deck.

It's all about food and sleep. Some grab a catnap when they can, even if it means crashing on a hard linoleum floor.

Their jobs aren't the most glamorous.

They bake bread, stock soda machines and wash other sailors' sweat- and grease-stained clothes, all part of an effort for a war they can't see.

Concerned parents who haven't heard much, or anything, from their children e-mail reporters for news: "If you see my son, give him a hug for me."

Um ... I'm not sure what kind of reaction that would get from a sailor who's been at sea for more than two months without a port call.

Seriously, though, your sailor or isn't ignoring you, mom. There's just not much time for phone calls and e-mails.

Besides, for the nearly 5,500 people on board, there are about five computers and only a dozen or so phones set aside for personal use. Sailors wait in line as long as two hours to call home, hoping that by the time they pick up a phone the line hasn't gone down.

This is where having connections is key; you just might get computer access if you hook up a buddy with a hot meal.

See **ROLE** on page 2

Latest developments

■ A suicide attacker driving a taxi with a bomb inside killed four American soldiers at a road checkpoint. Iraq's vice president identified the bomber as an Iraqi soldier and said suicide attacks will now be "routine military policy."

■ The Pentagon said the number of American deaths stood at 36, including 29 killed in action. The others were nonhostile deaths, the military said.

■ French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed the United Nations must play a large role in running Iraq after the war, Chirac's office said.

■ U.S. warplanes struck Republican Guard positions south of Baghdad to soften defenses around the Iraqi capital in preparation for a U.S.-led ground assault, senior Navy officers said.

■ Military officers confirmed reports that U.S. forces had found the bodies of some coalition troops in shallow graves near An Nasiriyah and said forensic investigators were going to the sites.

■ U.S. warplanes used laser-guided missiles to destroy a building in Basra where some 200 Iraqi paramilitary fighters were believed to be meeting; the death toll was not known. British troops also staged a raid into the city and destroyed five tanks and two statues of Saddam Hussein.

■ Group Capt. Al Lockwood, spokesman for British forces in the Gulf, said a British soldier was killed and five wounded in a "friendly fire" incident north of Basra. He said the incident occurred as British forces were engaging Iraqi troops.

■ Iraq's information minister said President Bush should be charged with war crimes for the deaths of Iraqi civilians. The U.S. Central Command said Iraqi civilian neighborhoods were not being targeted.

■ Iraqi state television reported that three Iraqis had been arrested for spying for the United States. The televised reports alleged the men were assigned to inspect areas of Baghdad that had been attacked to determine if they needed to be hit again.

■ A low-flying Iraqi missile skimmed over the Gulf, avoided detection by U.S. defense systems and exploded just offshore in Kuwait City, shattering windows at a popular seaside shopping mall.

— The Associated Press

Role

Continued from Page 1

While parents are eager for news of their children, sailors are curious about what's happening outside their steel-walled world in the Persian Gulf. They approach the couple of dozen reporters on board, hungry for any word on the States and Iraq.

"Sir, did we get Saddam?" one asked a Canadian reporter.

The carrier has plenty of televisions, showing news and movies around the clock. The signal comes and goes, freezing Bill O'Reilly mid-rant (a blessing, some would say). Sailors wanting to know the latest on the prisoners of war stare at the frozen screen, willing it to restart.

While war rages just across "the beach," those not flying in aircraft don't see any of it except what's on CNN and Fox News.

Most sailors, except those affected by increased flight operations, say the war hasn't changed their work schedules. But they say it has given them a renewed sense of purpose for why they're here and why their jobs are important.

The sailor in the laundry room washes the cook's clothes. The cook makes sandwiches for the sailors who work round the clock on the catapults, slinging planes off the flight deck for the skies over Iraq.

From those planes, sailors jam radar and take out Iraqi artillery aimed at Marines and soldiers.

No, most of these sailors sweating away below decks may not see the war.

But they are very much a part of it.

Kendra Helmer is embedded on the USS Kitty Hawk. E-mail her at: helmerk@mail.estripes.osd.mil

News tracker: What's new with old news

States

Arcade shooting: A Times Square arcade that was the scene of a multiple shooting earlier this month in New York has been shut down by police.

Police said nine incidents of violent activity and six incidents of underage patronage had occurred in the Broadway City Arcade, which also includes a nightclub. Numerous felony arrests have been made inside the location since Jan. 31, 2002.

On March 9, eight people were shot and two stabbed at the second-floor nightclub. Five people were arrested in the incident.

Tobacco settlement in jeopardy: A \$10 billion Illinois court judgment against Philip Morris may jeopardize payments to the 46 states involved in a 1998 settlement with the tobacco industry, according to Washington's attorney general.

Philip Morris has told state attorneys general that it can't post a \$12 billion bond required as part of an Illinois class-action lawsuit and pay the \$2.6 billion it owes the states next month.

Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire, who negotiated the 1998 settlement between states and the tobacco companies, said Friday that if the issue isn't resolved soon she and other attorneys general will file motions to intervene in the Illinois case and get the bond reduced.

War affecting tourism: War in Iraq is dissuading some potential tourists from visiting New York City, and tourism officials are concerned a prolonged conflict will cause longer-term damage to the \$25 billion industry.

"Visitors seem to be taking a wait-and-see attitude," said Cristyne L. Nicholas, president of NYC & Company, the city's tourism agency. "We haven't seen any major cancellations, but advance bookings are down for the spring and summer."

In 2002, 5.8 million foreigners visited the city, compared with 5.7 million in 2001 and 6.8 million in 2000, according to NYC & Company. The number of domestic visitors from 1999 to 2001 was relatively unchanged, at about 29.5 million.

Military

Academy sign removed: Large letters reading "Bring Me Men" that critics say became a symbol of a male-dominated culture at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., have been removed.

The sign, above a ramp where cadets formed to march, was taken down Friday under a directive that emerged from an Air Force investigation of a sexual assault scandal at the academy.

At least 56 female cadets reported being sexually assaulted over the past 10 years at the academy.

Business

More Enron revelations: Newly released federal documents suggest that the Los Angeles suburb of Glendale helped Enron

Corp. traders manipulate California's energy market to drive up prices, a newspaper report reported Saturday.

The Glendale utility was among several public agencies that allegedly engaged in price gouging during the state's 2000-2001 power crisis, but it stands out due to the sheer volume and detail of evidence against it, the newspaper said.

City officials have said that they agreed to share profits with Enron from the sale of surplus electricity produced by the city's power plant but that an investigation found no wrongdoing.

World

Prince out of hospital: A smiling Prince Charles checked out of a hospital Saturday after undergoing hernia surgery the day before.

"Hernia today, gone tomorrow," Charles told well-wishers as he left King Edward VII hospital.

His office at St. James's Palace has released no details about how he sustained the injury.

Charles, 54, left the hospital alone, although he was accompanied by Camilla Parker Bowles, his longtime companion, when he checked in Friday.

Embassy bombings: U.S. prosecutors have told lawyers for four men convicted in the 1998 bombings of two American embassies in Africa that they did not turn over 647 pages of transcripts of interviews with a crucial government witness, according to court filings.

The recordings were made by the United States Marshals Service without the knowledge of prosecutors. The U.S. attorney's office said it only recently discovered their existence. Another court document shows that the transcripts have since been given to defense lawyers.

The men were convicted of carrying out a conspiracy that included the bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on Aug. 7, 1998, which killed 224 people, including 12 Americans.

Police seek arrest of Milosevic's wife: The wife of former President Slobodan Milosevic has fled to Russia, Serbian police said Saturday, as their investigation into the recent assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic implicated her in an earlier political murder.

The Interior Ministry said police were "searching intensely" for Mirjana Markovic, citing "credible suspicions of her involvement in the murder" of former Serbian President Ivan Stambolic.

An order to detain Markovic for questioning was issued Friday, shortly after police found the remains of Stambolic, a Milosevic foe missing since August 2000.

The discovery of Stambolic's body, shot with two bullets and thrown into a lime pit in northern Serbia, came as police rounded up and questioned thousands of suspects in Djindjic's murder.

From The Associated Press

Suicide

Continued from Page 1

dishes were destroyed, and Information Ministry officials said the 10th floor — which housed an Internet server — was gutted.

Elsewhere in the city, black-clad mourners gathered at a marketplace where Iraqi officials said dozens of civilians were killed by a coalition bomb. But despite still-smoking fires and intermit-

tent explosions, Saturday saw the heaviest traffic on the streets of Baghdad since the war broke out. Many shops were open in the commercial districts and thousands of residents were on the streets.

In Kuwait, meanwhile, authorities said Iraq fired a missile of its own that damaged a popular shopping mall in Kuwait City.

Iraqi missile hits Kuwait City pier

BY DIANA ELIAS
The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — A low-flying Iraqi missile screamed across the Persian Gulf early Saturday, avoiding the detection of U.S. defense systems and landing just off the coast of Kuwait City, shattering windows at a popular seaside shopping mall.

Two people were treated for minor injuries after the 1:45 a.m. blast, the closest a missile has come to the Kuwaiti capital since U.S. troops based in the Persian Gulf emirate invaded neighboring Iraq on March 20.

"It came from the northeast part of the Gulf. It seemed to be traveling at a very low level," so no air raid sirens sounded, Fire Chief Jassim al-Mansouri said.

U.S. Patriot missile batteries guard Kuwait against missile attacks by neighboring Iraq.

In Doha, Qatar, the U.S. Central Command said it was investigating.

The missile struck a small pier in front of the Souq Sharq mall — a multilevel shopping center with department stores, restaurants, theaters and Western-style shops. The explosion shattered windows, blasted a glass door at the front of the mall and blew out huge chunks of plaster from the adjacent parking structure.

An Egyptian and a Kuwaiti were treated for injuries at a nearby hospital and released, the Kuwait News Agency reported.

Col. Youssef al-Mullah, the spokesman for Kuwait's military, told The Kuwait News Agency on Saturday that the missile that landed near Souk Sharq was manufactured in Iraq. Earlier, U.S. and Kuwaiti officials said the missile

was believed to have been made in China.

Al-Mullah said the type of missile can be launched from a mobile battery and has a range of 56 to 125 miles. Iraq hides the missiles in residential buildings in southern Iraq, he said. Kuwait City is about 50 miles from the Iraqi border.

Later in the day, Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister Sheik Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah told the news agency that Kuwait has deployed a missile defense system to intercept missiles like the one that hit near the mall. He did not provide details.

It was the 16th missile Iraq has fired at Kuwait since the war began, said Information Minister Sheik Ahmed Fahd Al Ahmed Al Sabah. None has contained chemical or biological weapons, or caused significant damage. At least three have been destroyed by Patriots, U.S. officials said.

Anger flares over market bombing in Baghdad

BY HAMZA HENDAWI
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Wailing and sobbing, black-clad mourners gathered Saturday for a funeral procession amid the wreckage of a Baghdad marketplace where Iraqi officials say dozens of civilians died in a coalition bombing.

At the Al-Nasr market in the working-class district of Al Shula, crowds of mourners wailed amid bloodstains and piles of wreckage.

At the scene of the Friday bombing, women in black chadors were sobbing outside homes where some of the victims lived. Men cried and hugged each other as a funeral procession passed through the market.

Down the road, residents gathered at a Shiite Muslim mosque, crowded around seven wooden coffins draped in blankets. Some of the men stood silently. Others sobbed into trembling hands. In the background, women cried, "Oh God! Oh God!"

Information Minister Mohammed Saeed Sahhaf had said earlier that 58 people were killed — and many others wounded — in the explosion at the market Friday evening. There were conflicting reports, however, on the number of casualties.

Haqi Ismail Razouq, director of al-Nour Hospital, where the dead and injured were taken, put the death toll at 30 and the number of injured at 47; surgeon Issa Ali Ilwan said 47 were killed and 50 injured. Witnesses said they counted as many as 50 bodies.

There was no immediate explanation for the discrepancy.

The U.S. Central Command in Qatar, which has denied that coalition forces target civilian neighborhoods, said it was looking into the incident.

Apaches pound Republican Guard

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING
The Associated Press

SOMEWHERE IN IRAQI DESERT — Apache helicopter gunships raided Republican Guard units south of Baghdad late Friday in the first major attack by the 101st Airborne Division during the war.

Two of the Apaches crashed but all crewmembers escaped injury, officials said.

Helicopters from the 2nd Battalion took out four tanks, six armored personnel carriers, 15 vehicles, a fuel site and a fiber optics tower, said Maj. Randall Haws, the battalion's executive officer. The battle assessment from the 1st Battalion was not available.

The attack force also included artillery and Air Force jets, officials said.

The crashes were blamed on "brown-out" conditions, which are caused by clouds of brown desert sand created when a helicopter approaches the ground. That makes it difficult for the pilot to see to ground.

The pilots have trained on brown-out landings extensively in the last year and since arriving in the Iraqi theater a month ago. But it is still a high risk — some even consider it the most dangerous part of a mission like the one Friday night.

"It's literally the scariest thing I've done in my life," Haws said.

The first crash happened just minutes into the mission, which began about 8 p.m. The pilot from the 2nd Battalion over-torqued the helicopter during the take-off, Haws said. The decision was made as a precaution, but the helicopter crashed a short time later, Haws said.

The second helicopter crashed as it landed after completing its mission at about 10:30 p.m.

"I saw the dust cloud over the entire helicopter," said Spc. Russell Buckhard, 23, of Miami, who was on standby to reload Hellfire missiles onto the aircrafts. "I heard a loud smash with sparks flying." A pilot from the first crash had a possible broken leg, but the others were considered in relatively good shape.

"They're already joking about taking parts off the aircrafts," Haws said. "These guys will bounce back. They'll be OK."

Haws, however, said losing the aircraft is a loss: One cost \$22 million; the second, with a more advanced radar system cost \$27 million.

"We can't crash two every night," Haws said.

A third Apache from the 1st Battalion was grounded after its computer system malfunctioned. A security team was dispatched to recover it.

There was no substantial damage from enemy fire to the choppers, Haws said.

College Basketball

SOUTH

Mich. St. 60, Maryland 58

SAN ANTONIO — Right to the final shot, the Maryland Terrapins were convinced their title reign would go on.

Then that last shot missed. And they didn't seem to know what to do.

With shoulders slumped and blank looks on their faces, the Terps stood still as the Michigan State Spartans danced around them in celebration of a 60-58 victory in the South Regional semifinals Friday night.

Michigan State's Paul Davis had a dunk with 50.6 seconds left to tie it, then muscled his way to a leaning bank shot with 4.7 seconds left to send the seventh-seeded Spartans into the regional finals for the third time in four years.

MSU, the lowest seed left in the tournament, won for the eighth time in nine games. Being one win from the Final Four is an incredible feat for a team that was 14-11 on Feb. 23 and in jeopardy of not even making the tournament. The Spartans (22-12) play Sunday against top-seeded Texas. The Longhorns advanced by beating Connecticut 82-78.

The Terps (20-10) overcame a 13-point deficit with 8:07 left and still expected to win even when Davis' basket put them down two with 4.7 seconds left.

Steve Blake dribbled to the top of the key, got set and put up a three-pointer that could've won it. But the ball hit the back iron and bounced away, prompting the wildly different reactions by both teams.

Michigan State was in control nearly the entire game, leading by 10 in the opening minutes and holding Maryland to 24 points in the first half, matching its lowest 20 minutes of the season.

Even when the Terps tied it at 32 early in the second half, the Spartans responded with a 15-2 run. Maryland seemed to be out of answers, especially when Blake stole the ball at the top of the key and coasted in for an uncontested basket — but jammed it into the outside of the rim.

Texas 82, UConn 78

SAN ANTONIO — T.J. Ford has said all along there's more to Texas than just him.

Turns out he's right.

Brandon Mouton scored 27 points, and Ford came up with the big plays at the end to help top-seeded Texas beat Connecticut 82-78 on Friday night in the South Regional semifinals.

The Longhorns (25-6) will play seventh-seed Michigan State (22-12) on Sunday for a berth in the Final Four.

Ford, who had 13 points and nine assists, sat for five minutes in the second half and watched for most of the Connecticut run that turned a 62-48 Texas lead into a 74-71 deficit.

With its second-half rally, UConn (23-10) might have sent Texas back to Austin if not for what Huskies coach Jim Calhoun could only call a "weird" play.

Texas led 78-76 when the Huskies' Marcus White went up for the tying layup with 35 seconds left. Brian Bodicker stuck his hand up and the ball stopped cold, wedged between the backboard and the rim.

Whistles blew, the clock stopped with 35 seconds left and 33,009 people at the Alamodome didn't know whether to cheer or groan.

Calhoun could only smile. What else could he do? The possession arrow pointed to the Longhorns. When a Texas player popped the ball out and it dropped through the basket, the Huskies' chances fell with it.

Given the chance to hold the lead, the Longhorns got four straight free throws from Ivey and Ford to seal it.

Calhoun thought his team was on the verge of winning.

EAST

Syracuse 79, Auburn 78

ALBANY, N.Y. — Syracuse got a taste of what it feels like to be on the other end of a comeback.

The Orangemen, who had 14 come-from-behind victories this season, had to hang on until the final seconds Friday night before beating Auburn 79-78 in the East Regional semifinals.

Third-seeded Syracuse, which rallied from 17 points down in a second-round win over Oklahoma State, will play top-seeded Oklahoma on Sunday for the right to go to the Final Four.

Freshman Carmelo Anthony scored all 18 of his points in the second half for Syracuse (27-5), which moved on to the round of eight for the seventh time overall and fourth under Boeheim.

The Sooners (27-6) advanced to the regional final by beating 12th-seeded Butler 65-54.

Syracuse is the only Big East school still going.

Auburn (22-12) hit four three-pointers over the final 1:18, making Big East fans nervous about a third-round shut-out.

Hakim Warrick had 15 points for Syracuse, Josh Pace added 14 and Duany had 12, including the four free throws in the final 27 seconds.

Duany, a 68 percent free throw shooter, downplayed what he did in the last half-minute.

Marquis Daniels had 27 points for Auburn, but he had only two in the final 7:35 as Syracuse stopped his inside scoring against the 2-3 zone.

The Orangemen led by as much as 33-16 on the way to a 37-27 halftime lead.

The Tigers, the team many thought didn't even deserve an at-large bid to the tournament, opened the second half looking more like the team that beat Saint Joseph's and second-seeded Wake Forest in the first two rounds.

Oklahoma 65, Butler 54

ALBANY, N.Y. — Oklahoma star Hollis Price saw it coming when Ebi Ere hit a pullup jumper midway through the first half.

Playing with a broken bone in his left wrist, Ere scored 25 points as the top-seeded Sooners ended 12th-seeded Butler's scintillating tournament run with a 65-54 victory Friday night in the East Regional semifinals.

Ere made a lot happen early in the season, averaging more than 20 points through the first six games. But he lost his shooting touch during the Big 12 season and eventually lost his starting job, finally suggesting to coach Kelvin Sampson to start freshman De'Angelo Alexander in his place.

And Alexander had excelled, scoring a team-high 31 points in the first two rounds. On this night, though, he had only two points as Ere took over the game and Oklahoma's backups outscored Butler's reserves 29-8.

Ere helped put Oklahoma (27-6) within one victory of its second consecutive Final Four. The Sooners will meet third-seeded Syracuse on Sunday.

Butler, which started four seniors, was the lowest-seeded team remaining in the tournament after pulling off two big upsets against Mississippi State and Louisville. The only 12th seed ever to advance to a regional final was Missouri, which made it there last year.

Butler, 27-6 and regular-season champions of the Horizon League, wasn't able to match Missouri's feat because its perimeter game never got in sync against Oklahoma, which held the Bulldogs to 4-for-13 shooting from three-point range.

From The Associated Press

Scores/standings

NBA

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
xy-Detroit	45	26	.634	—
y-New Jersey	44	28	.611	1½
Philadelphia	42	29	.592	3
Indiana	42	30	.583	3½
New Orleans	41	32	.562	5
Boston	39	34	.534	7
Orlando	39	34	.534	7
Washington	34	38	.472	11½

Milwaukee	34	39	.466	12
New York	32	41	.438	14
Atlanta	29	44	.397	17
Chicago	26	47	.356	20
Miami	23	50	.315	23
Toronto	22	49	.310	23
Cleveland	14	58	.194	31½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
xy-Dallas	54	18	.750	—
xy-Sacramento	51	21	.708	3
x-San Antonio	51	20	.718	2½
Portland	45	27	.625	9
Minnesota	46	28	.622	9
Utah	43	29	.597	11
L.A. Lakers	42	30	.583	12
Phoenix	38	34	.528	16

Houston	37	35	.514	17
Golden State	36	37	.493	18½
Seattle	34	37	.479	19½
Memphis	26	46	.361	28
L.A. Clippers	22	50	.306	32
Denver	16	56	.222	38

x-clinched playoff spot
y-division leader

NCAA

EAST REGIONAL Semifinals

At Pepsi Arena

Albany, N.Y.

Friday

Oklahoma 65, Butler 54

Syracuse 79, Auburn 78

SOUTH REGIONAL Semifinals

At The Alamodome

San Antonio

Friday

Texas 82, Connecticut 78

Michigan State 60, Maryland 58

MIDWEST REGIONAL Semifinals

At The Hubert H.

Humphrey Metrodome

Minneapolis

Thursday

Kentucky 63, Wisconsin 57
Marquette 77, Pittsburgh 74

WEST REGIONAL Semifinals

At Arrowhead Pond

Anaheim, Calif.

Thursday

Arizona 88, Notre Dame 71

Kansas 69, Duke 65

NHL

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
y-Ottawa	48	21	8	1	105	249	177
xz-New Jersey	44	20	8	5	101	203	159
xz-Tampa Bay	35	23	14	5	89	211	196
x-Philadelphia	40	20	13	4	97	188	162
x-Toronto	41	27	7	3	92	226	199
x-Washington	37	28	8	5	87	212	208
Boston	35	29	9	4	83	231	223
N.Y. Islanders	34	31	10	2	80	216	214

N.Y. Rangers	31	34	9	3	74	197	217
Montreal	28	33	8	9	73	195	225
Buffalo	25	35	9	8	67	176	202
Florida	23	34	12	9	67	169	226
Atlanta	27	38	7	5	66	207	271
Pittsburgh	26	41	6	5	63	182	239
Carolina	22	38	11	6	61	166	224

Western Conference

	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
y-Dallas	42	17	15	4	103	234	165
xz-Detroit	45	20	9	3	102	247	190
xz-Vancouver	44	21	12	1	101	255	199
x-Colorado	38	18	13	8	97	230	182
x-St. Louis	41	21	9	6	97	238	198
x-Minnesota	40	27	10	1	91	190	170
x-Anaheim	38	26	9	5	90	194	185
x-Edmonton	36	25	8	9	89	218	214

Phoenix	30	34	9	4	73	192	213
Nashville	27	31	13	6	73	180	195
Chicago	28	33	11	6	73	191	213
Los Angeles	30	36	6	5	71	189	207
Calgary	27	34	12	4	70	174	215
San Jose	28	35	6	8	70	202	224
Columbus	27	40	7	3	64	196	246

Two points for a win, one point for a tie and overtime loss.

x-clinched playoff spot

y-clinched division

z-division leader

Division winners seeded in top three

From The Associated Press

B. Labonte picks up slack, pole

The Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Avoiding the controversy that dogged teammate Tony Stewart on Friday, Bobby Labonte grabbed the pole for the Samsung/Radio Shack 500 at Texas Motor Speedway.

Labonte took his second pole of the season and the 23rd of his career with a lap of 193.514 mph on the 1½-mile Texas oval.

Labonte has three top-five finishes in his past three starts, including a victory in Atlanta.

"One thing we brought with us today was confidence. Obviously, we ran good in Atlanta and we've run good here in the past, and we brought the same car we ran in Atlanta," he said.

Labonte had a quiet, almost uneventful day compared with his Joe Gibbs Racing teammate. Stewart, the defending Winston Cup champion, found himself starting from scratch after his primary car failed inspection and was impounded by NASCAR.

Stewart was forced to use his backup car, which his team rolled off the hauler and quickly prepared.

Greg Zipadelli, Stewart's crew chief said, "The car we have now is set up really similar to the car we had. We put our backup motor in, which is only a couple of horsepower off of what we had in the primary. We just changed a lot of things. There were a few little things we weren't able to change."

Despite the scramble, Stewart qualified 22nd at 190.154.

"All of our cars are good, whether they're primary or a backup," he said.

The 38-year-old Labonte, the 2000 series champion, was followed by Elliott Sadler, Ryan Newman and Jimmie Johnson, three of NASCAR's vaunted twenty-something "Young Guns."

Sadler, 27, who won his first career pole two weeks ago in Darlington after a third-place effort the previous week in Atlanta, was runner-up this time at 193.313.

Newman, 25, last year's top Winston Cup rookie and leading pole-winner with six, was third on Friday at 193.140.